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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9115
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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4271
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0138
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0161
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0149
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3867
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0226
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0812
RUEWMFC/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2266
RUEABNE/DEA HQS WASHDC
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

S E C R E T TASHKENT 000113

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN BRIAN RORAFF AND INL/AAE ANDREW BUHLER
ANKARA FOR DEA MARK DESTITO
DUSHANBE FOR DEA PAUL HACKETT AND INL RANJEET SINGH
ISLAMABAD FOR DEA DOUG CORTINOVIS AND MIKE MARSAC
ASTANA FOR INL ANTHONY BEAVER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KCOR](#) [PINR](#) [SNAR](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: SECURITY SERVICE POWER-BROKERS LIMIT
COUNTER-NARCOTICS COOPERATION

REF: A. TASHKENT 82
[1](#)B. 07 TASHKENT 1900
[1](#)C. 07 TASHKENT 1908
[1](#)D. 07 TASHKENT 2063
[1](#)E. 07 TASHKENT 1988
[1](#)F. 07 TASHKENT 2000

Classified By: Poloff Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Reftel A discussed the keen interest of the counter-narcotics-focused Sensitive Investigative Unit in resuming active cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. However, it is still uncertain whether the Government of Uzbekistan would issue long-term visas to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officials, despite recent hints at higher levels that it wants the assistance. Such visa difficulties have also affected the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's contractor and visiting U.S. forensic experts. This and other anecdotal evidence suggests that there is competition between well-intentioned customs and law enforcement agencies on the one hand, and some other elements within the Government of Uzbekistan's security apparatus on the other who may be involved in narcotics smuggling or facilitate the activities of traffickers and do not want border security assistance projects to be too effective. End summary.

Baffling Visa and Accreditation Woes

[1](#)2. (C) In the spring of 2007 the Government of Uzbekistan, in effect, suspended cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration when it would not issue visas to DEA staff, even though the host government had declared that counter-narcotics is a high priority. Earlier, in December 2006, the Drug Enforcement Administration suspended support

for the Sensitive Investigative Unit, for lack of results. Also, in mid-2006, the Embassy was informed that no regional officers could be based in the Embassy. At that time the Tashkent Drug Enforcement Administration office also had responsibility for Dushanbe and Bishkek. These actions corresponded with a sharp deterioration in the bilateral relationship.

¶3. (C) However, by late 2007 post observed increasing signs that the Government of Uzbekistan wanted to improve ties. This included hints to poloff from Kamol Dusmetov, the top official of the National Center of Drug Control and Deputy Chairman of the State Commission of Drug Control (part of the Cabinet of Ministers), that the Government of Uzbekistan would welcome renewed cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Administration (reftel B). In November 2007, a bilateral Joint Border Security Working Group convened to discuss numerous pipeline projects and modalities and was itself seen as an encouraging development (reftel C). All Uzbek law enforcement and security agencies, including the National Security Service (NSS) participate in the bilateral group.

¶4. (S/NF) Yet, surprisingly, Washington Group International (WGI), the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's contractor in Uzbekistan, was denied a renewal of its business accreditation within days of the upbeat statements at this key bilateral meeting. The contractor recently installed a state-of-the-art network of portal radiation monitors throughout the country that the Defense Threat Reduction Office Chief described as "truly world-class." This system has already paid dividends in the detection of a suspicious freight train car containing radioactive cargo, probably destined for Iran (reftel D).

¶5. (S/NF) Nonetheless, the National Security Service (which includes the Border Guards) consistently denied Washington Group International access to several key border checkpoints to properly complete this worthwhile project, even though the installation had proceeded for several years with the Government of Uzbekistan's full understanding of the project.

In response to a request from the Chairman of the State Customs Committee, Washington Group International's scope of work was increased in 2007 to include the installation of a significant number of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras at border posts, which could be remotely accessed at all times from Customs Headquarters in Tashkent. However, the National Security Service objected to this part of the project, suggesting there may be strong reasons why they do not want officials from other agencies seeing what is happening at all hours on various border crossings. As a result of the access and accreditation problems, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency has made the decision to terminate the remaining portions of this project in Uzbekistan.

¶6. (C) The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) is funding an ongoing project to upgrade the Main Forensic Laboratory, which analyzes criminal evidence. Visa applications for two visiting forensic experts were submitted within a reasonable timeframe, supported by a diplomatic note, and Americas Desk Chief Ismat Fayzullaev assured poloff that "the necessary actions were taken" immediately. Yet the Uzbek Embassy in Washington subsequently reported no contact from Tashkent and presented conflicting stories of "standard" visa procedures. The trip was postponed, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained as of January 23 that there is still no record of any visa applications even though the "inter-agency process" was reportedly underway weeks earlier. This inter-agency process always includes influential members of the National Security Service and the Apparatus who have the authority to supersede the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on visa issuances.

¶7. (C) Poloff also followed up with Fayzullaev on January 23 regarding the pending application for a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officer to temporarily visit Tashkent for discussions about the long-term prospect of supporting the Sensitive Investigative Unit. In contradiction to the

lower-level enthusiasm for renewed cooperation and more senior-level hints, the visa was not promptly issued despite repeated follow-ups. Fayzullaev also informed poloff that this was held up in "the inter-agency process" and "under consideration." (Note: After additional follow up efforts by post a three-month visa was ultimately issued on January 125. End note).

18. (C) Government of Uzbekistan officials have recently appealed for more counter-narcotics assistance from donor countries in the wake of alarming new Afghanistan drug production figures (reftel E), yet we believe that some elements within the government are not eager to facilitate foreign aid that would significantly impact the drug trade. There is also institutional memory at post recalling that, when the Drug Enforcement Administration was active here, it was difficult to convince law enforcement authorities, including the SIU, to target kingpins rather than just low-level mules.

"Roof"

19. (C) Post LES Political Specialist reported that it is widely assumed among local residents that Afghan drug traders

are building big houses in the Tashkent area under the watchful and protective eyes of the National Security Service. This is consistent with widespread and longstanding beliefs that the National Security Service runs a protection racket in which legitimate and illegitimate businesses alike must pay what Uzbeks refer to as the "krisha" (or "roof" in Russian, i.e., protection money) in order to operate. It is reasonable to assume that, as everyday Uzbek entrepreneurs are targeted, so too the drug smugglers must pay. Thus, even if the National Security Service is not directly involved in the drug trade it may have every reason to look the other way.

No Support From Above

110. (C) Without exception, we have been favorably impressed by the professionalism of rank-and-file law enforcement and customs officers on our field observations in this annual round of end-use monitoring throughout the country. Local officers are proud of the equipment that has been provided to them and seem to genuinely strive to do their jobs as best as they can. Yet, it is impossible to overlook the failure of the top levels of the Government of Uzbekistan to provide even modest sums for obtaining spare parts or issue timely visas for visiting experts to conduct training programs. In recent weeks poloff has visited numerous Customs offices as well as the main Forensic Laboratory at the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Internal Affairs Explosives Laboratory, and the Sensitive Investigative Unit. While local staff clearly do their best to keep things in good condition, invariably some breakdowns have occurred. Each location appealed for modest additional assistance to provide the replacement parts which the Government of Uzbekistan is unwilling to procure itself. Even if it is arduous to obtain foreign parts from abroad, higher-level officials could certainly have prioritized such repairs if they wished. Instead, a few years ago the National Security Service confiscated one of the Jeep Cherokees intended for the exclusive use of Customs.

Comment:

111. (C) While the Government of Uzbekistan has hinted at a higher level that it would indeed welcome the return of the Drug Enforcement Administration's assistance, it is uncertain whether it would commit to issuing long-term visas for American Drug Enforcement Administration staff to properly support any resumption of assistance to the Sensitive Investigative Unit. On the positive side, our field visit suggests that, if the Drug Enforcement Administration decides

to resume activities in Uzbekistan, at least it will not have to start over from scratch and it will encounter a cooperative attitude among many law enforcement and customs personnel. Yet the difficulty of obtaining even short-term visas for visitors and of accessing border operations is troublesome. The mixed messages may be due to involvement of the elements of the National Security Service, including the Border Guards, in narcotics smuggling or in facilitating the activities of narcotics traffickers. This may also explain why Washington Group International was sidelined by visa and accreditation problems while upgrading border security at key access points (reftel F). It may be telling that, during CENTCOM Commander Admiral Fallon's January 24 meeting with Uzbek National Security Council members, National Security Council Secretary (and senior National Security Service officer) Ataev bristled at the suggestion that narcotics were transiting Uzbekistan.

¶12. (C) Certain vested and well-placed interests probably have a strong incentive to keep the U.S. counter-narcotics activities on a short leash if they operate again in Uzbekistan and, as before, may balk at pursuing leads that incriminate parties higher than drug mules. Post welcomes an upcoming visit by Drug Enforcement Administration officers, as well as possible counter-narcotics-related follow-up to Admiral Fallon's visit, to test the waters with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other officials. We need to determine whether the Government of Uzbekistan as a whole is serious about counter-narcotics cooperation or not and whether it can work effectively with U.S. agencies to tackle even high-level official involvement in narco-trafficking.

NORLAND